

Testimony of
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On Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
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Thank you Mr. Chairman, Senator Inouye, and members of the Committee for inviting me to discuss the Administration's proposal for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and, in particular, the reauthorization of ESEA programs for American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives.

Five years ago, in the reauthorization of the ESEA, this Administration set out to ensure that all children, regardless of background, could reach and would be held to high standards. The President and Secretary Riley reject the "tyranny of low expectations," the deeply flawed assumption that it is acceptable to provide children in poverty with a second- or even a third-class education. This Administration has never been willing to accept that assumption. Every child needs and deserves a world class education. No child should be allowed to drift through school unable to read. No child should have an unqualified teacher. And no child should have to go to a failing school.

Since that time, to help ensure that all students are challenged to achieve to their full ability, the States and school districts have taken significant steps to establish high standards for

all students, particularly poor and educationally disadvantaged students. More importantly, there are promising signs of real State progress toward meeting those standards.

The themes in our reauthorization proposal are intended to continue the progress that the nation's schools have already made in helping all students increase their academic performance, including poor, minority, low-income, and educationally disadvantaged students. Our proposal builds on the 1994 reauthorization to encourage all of our students, including American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives, to improve their academic performance..

To increase educational excellence and equity, the Administration's ESEA reauthorization proposal has six broad themes. They are: (1) implementing high standards in every classroom; (2) reducing class sizes in the early grades and helping every child read well by the 3rd grade, if not earlier; (3) strengthening teacher and principal quality; (4) emphasizing accountability for school and student performance, including turning around failing schools, and toughening accountability in Federal education programs; (5) providing safe, healthy, and disciplined learning environments that better connect students, teachers, families, and communities; and (6) Modernizing schools for the 21st Century by putting useful technology in the classrooms, making schools smaller and more personalized, increasing opportunities to learn foreign languages, and expanding after-school and summer programs.

Our investments in Title I, Comprehensive School Reform Demonstrations, the Class-Size Reduction program, the Reading Excellence Act, and after-school programs, among others, are important components of our effort to get communities and their teachers and principals the resources they need to raise achievement for all students, including American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives. These important investments, and their targeting provisions, rightly focus on providing resources to communities that do not have the necessary resources to

provide a world-class education to all their children so that the educational achievement gap between the “haves” and the “have nots” will, over time, disappear.

Our reauthorization proposal recognizes that qualified teachers are a critical in-school factor in improving student achievement, and all of our children deserve to have high-quality and well-prepared teachers in the classroom. It would end the practice of putting unqualified teachers in front of the most educationally disadvantaged and educationally at-risk students, improve resources for professional development so that our teachers are able to improve their skills, train educators in the use of technology in the classroom, prepare teachers to teach to high standards for all students, and help ensure that teachers are well trained to teach students with limited English proficiency.

Our reauthorization proposal includes significant language on accountability that strikes a careful balance between, on the one hand, giving schools the increased support and flexibility they need to raise achievement levels for all students and, on the other hand, holding schools accountable when they do not measure up to clearly established goals. Toward that end, our accountability provisions include measures intended to end social promotion, encourage school report cards, identify and turn around low-performing schools, improve discipline in schools and classrooms, and putting in place measurable ways to make change happen, such as standards-based assessments at different grade levels.

These measures will help improve the educational opportunities for American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native students and focus more attention on helping them achieve to challenging standards.

American Indians and Alaska Natives have made progress in recent decades but continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty and low educational attainment and have fewer

educational opportunities than other students. For example, recent data show that:

The high school completion rate for American Indians, ages 20 to 24, is 70 percent, 12.5 percent below the national average.

In 1990, 36.2 percent of American Indian children ages 5-17 were living below the poverty level, compared with 17 percent of all other children.

In 1992, 31 percent of American Indian high school graduates earned the core credits recommended by *A Nation at Risk* -- a dramatic increase over the 6 percent reported in 1982. However, the proportion of American Indian high school graduates taking the recommended core credits was well below that for all high school students (47 percent).

American Indian students, on average, score lower on the National Assessment of Education Progress than other students. For example, 48 percent of American Indian 4th graders scored "at or above basic" on the 1994 reading assessment, compared to 60 percent of all students.

The combined score on the SAT in 1994-95 for American Indians was 850, or 60 points lower than the combined score of 910 reported for all students.

In 1990, 9.3 percent of American Indian persons 25 years old and over had attained a bachelor's degree or higher, as compared to 20.3 percent for all persons.

These data undergird the important role that the Indian Education programs play in supporting the academic achievement of American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives. They also demonstrate the need for continued support for the important programs and services that are provided under the Indian Education, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native programs.

In 1994, Congress amended the Indian Education authorization to focus programs on improving the capacity of schools to provide challenging curriculum to Indian students. The statute now supports a comprehensive approach to educational reform and helps ensure that Indians benefit from national education reforms and receive every opportunity to achieve to high standards. The Title IX Indian Education programs under ESEA provide direct assistance for the education of Indian children and adults; the training of Indian individuals as educators and in other professions serving Indian people; and research, evaluation, and data collection. The programs promote the efforts of local educational agencies, State educational agencies, and Indian tribes and organizations to meet the unique educational and culturally related needs of these students. These programs also provide the authority for our proposed initiative for an American Indian Teacher Corps, through which 1,000 Indians will be recruited and trained to teach in areas where there are high concentrations of Indians.

The Administration's reauthorization proposal builds on the significant changes made in the 1994 reauthorization. While the proposal would maintain our commitment to the formula grant program to improve the quality of instruction that American Indian students receive, some minor changes are proposed. These changes include a clarification to eliminate confusion regarding the role of the parent committee, and a modification of the BIA application process to reduce redundancy in student identifications. Consistent with general Administration policy, several un-funded, generally duplicative authorizations would be repealed.

This Administration is particularly committed to improving the educational achievement of American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native students. Our reauthorization proposal is itself evidence of this commitment and the tremendous job done in the 1994 reauthorization to improve education programs for these students. The previous reauthorization made significant

changes in the Indian Education programs, and we have spent the past several years implementing those important reforms. In our consultation with Indian educators, tribes, parents, and students, as well as with the broader education community, we heard a strong consensus for continuing with the current mission.

Our reauthorization proposals for the Native Hawaiian and Alaska Native programs are intended to ease the administration of the programs in order to facilitate implementation of the innovative educational strategies that are emerging from native educators in Hawaii and Alaska. The current Native Hawaiian authorization has separate authorities in 7 different areas: Gifted and Talented Education; Special Education; Higher Education; Curriculum Development, Teacher Training, and Recruitment; Family-Based Education Centers; Community-Based Education Centers; and the Native Hawaiian Education and Island Councils. The current Alaska Native authorization has separate authorities in three different areas: Educational Planning, Curriculum Development, Teacher Training, and Recruitment; Home-Based Education for Preschool Children; and Student Enrichment Programs. Our experience has shown us that the particular requirements of these authorities has made it difficult to fund creative and new approaches to meeting the unique needs of Native Hawaiians and Alaska Natives.

For the Native Hawaiian program, we propose to merge the 7 authorities into one comprehensive authority that would give the Department the flexibility to fund creative, cross-cutting approaches to meeting the educational and culturally related needs of Native Hawaiian students. Similarly for the Alaska Native program, we propose to merge the three authorities into one comprehensive authority.

The Administration strongly opposes the proposal by the House Education and the Workforce Committee to repeal the Native Hawaiian programs. The House Committee's action

fails to consider the unique educational and culturally related needs of the Native Hawaiian population.

I would also like to point out that our proposal would retain the current set-asides for native populations and the Bureau of Indian Affairs in our State formula programs (except where the bill would consolidate programs). These set-asides provide funding for Title I, Class Size Reduction, professional development, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, and Homeless Education. These set-asides are important to maintain because they ensure that funds are available to serve the educational needs of American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives.

Our reauthorization proposal is not the only effort we are making to improve educational opportunities for Indian students. On August 6, 1998, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13096, which cited the importance of improving educational achievement and academic progress for American Indian and Alaska Native students and reaching the goal of preparing every student for responsible citizenship, continued learning, and productive employment.

In order to fulfill that commitment, the President directed Federal agencies to focus special attention on six key goals, which include:

- improving reading and mathematics;
- increasing high school completion and postsecondary attendance rates;
- reducing the influence of long-standing factors that impede educational performance, such as poverty and substance abuse;
- creating strong, safe, and drug-free school environments;
- improving science education; and
- expanding the use of educational technology.

The President called for the development of a comprehensive Federal Indian education

policy to accomplish the six goals and address the fragmentation of government services and the complexity of inter-governmental relationships affecting the education of American Indian and Alaska Native students.

This Executive Order is an important step forward in addressing systemic and long-standing difficulties in meeting the unique needs of our American Indian and Alaska Native students. The resulting Policy will set the stage for important discussions surrounding the programs and services that we provide to American Indian and Alaska Native students, and will have a positive impact on the educational achievement and academic opportunities available to them.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before this Committee. I look forward to discussing our reauthorization proposal with you and answering any questions that you may have.